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ABSTRACT

The use of newspaper and magazine advertisements for teaching foreign language skills in listening, speaking, reading, and writing as well as vocabulary, idiomatic expressions, grammar, pronunciation, and culture is encouraged and discussed. Suggested lessons and classroom activities are presented in four categories: vocabulary, grammatical rules and relationships, culture, and further activities. Lesson topics include understanding how advertisements use various kinds of puns or manipulate language, finding ads in which grammatical rules are broken, finding cultural generalizations in advertising, and using mail order catalogs to obtain cultural information. Each lesson lists an objective, materials, procedure, class activities, and in some cases, instructional suggestions. The section on further activities briefly, lists 12 classroom and assignment uses, and variations, for advertising. (MSE)

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ADVERTISEMENTS: An Overlooked Resource in the FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

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Introduction

A resource which has often been overlooked by teachers is the newspaper or magazine advertisement as a means of teaching a foreign language and culture. Advertisements can be used in numerous ways to teach the four skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—as well as vocabulary, idiomatic expressions, grammar, pronunciation, and culture. Besides their versatility, advertisements have several additional advantages for classroom use: they are readily available; they can be obtained free-of-charge; they may be reproduced without worry of copyright law; and they are highly motivational.

This booklet will demonstrate how ads can be used effectively in the foreign language classroom. Lessons and activities have been broken down into four broad categories: Vocabulary, Grammatical Rules and Relationships, Culture, and Further Activities.



Teaching Vocabulary

A picture file should be an integral component of all foreign language classrooms. Pictures provide the context for meaningful practice in the sounds, structures, and vocabulary of the foreign language and illustrate socio-cultural aspects. Pictures from advertisements may be effectively incorporated into a picture file, as they tend to be large and clear. One can find an infinite variety of pictures from advertisements; consequently, in addition to basic core vocabulary, more specific vocabulary (i.e., medical, technical, vocational) may also be illustrated. Pictures should include individual items and persons as well as situations. When mounting the pictures, it is preferable to omit the captions: you will want the student to recall the association of word and object when using the 'object' pictures; you will want to use the 'situational' pictures in a variety of oral contexts.

A mail-order catalogue can be an invaluable tool in the foreign language classroom. It can be used as a picture dictionary to teach vocabulary, as it contains a picture with an accompanying explanation or description. Mail-order catalogues are also excellent resources for teaching culture, and will be dealt with in greater detail in the section on culture.

An examination of advertising copy, however, shows us where the true value of advertisements as a tool for teaching language lies. The language of advertisements provides the means through which to study and understand the subtleties and nuances of a language. Copy writers purposely break rules of language to produce interesting effects and capture people's attention. One way they achieve this is by employing a play on words. Using this play on words technique in the class can turn a lesson on the subtleties and manipulation of language into a fun experience.

The following lesson is geared to an advanced level English as a Second Language class.

- Objective:** To show how we can play with words and manipulate language.
- Materials:** Advertisements in which puns are used. (See p. 3)
- Procedure:** Show the students various ads containing puns. Ask why the author used the words that he used.

Example: An advertisement for a clothing store: "Al's Wearhouse"

Ask the students which word is 'misused.' See if they can explain why the author used the word 'wear' instead of 'ware.'

Lexical puns

A. Puns on single words

- (1) Ad for a bank: "You can bank on us!"
- (2) An auto repair shop: "Your car is too young to smoke."
- (3) "Solve your pressing problems with a Westinghouse iron."
- (4) Ad for a motel: "You do the driving: leave the rest to us."
- (5) Ad for a donut shop: "We exchange money for dough."
- (6) Ad for an auto manufacturer: "After a hard day's work, a man can use a little pickup."
- (7) K-Mart: The sign of good things in store.
- (8) Scott knows a lot about people, and they have the 'papers' to prove it.
- (9) Ad from the American Cancer Society: "Smoking is a drag."
- (10) Joy cleans dishes clear down to the shine. Isn't that a nice reflection on you?
- (11) Simplicity Patterns: Suit yourself—this spring it's easy.
- (12) Ad for Curad adhesive strips: Try them and you'll "stick with it."
- (13) Drano takes the plunge.
- (14) Ad for a garbage company: "Our business is picking up."

B. Puns involving homophones

- (1) Ad for a new type of cheese: "Cheese bored?" (bored/board)
- (2) A reducing salon: "We recycle waists." (waist/waste)
- (3) A service station: "Wee service small cars." (wee/we)
- (4) A massage parlor: "People who knead people." (knead/need)
- (5) Scott towels have "Prints Charming." (prints/prince)
- (6) Ad for a bank: "Every spring we get loanly!" (loanly/lonely)

C. Phonological puns

- (1) Every litter bit hurts.
- (2) A grocery ad: "The garden of eatin'!"
- (3) A stocking ad: "Our stockings cover a multitude of shins."
- (4) A store selling dried fruits and nuts: "Come in just for the smell of i
- (5) "7-Up: A Cure for the Common Cola."
- (6) A pizza store: "Get a pizza the action."
- (7) Ad for G.E. bulbs: "Softglow lights couldn't glare less."
- (8) Ad from the American Respiratory Association: "It's a matter of life and breath."

D. Orthographic puns

- (1) "C-us if your motor overheats." ("cuss"/see us")
- (2) "Our eight-packs are grrrrrrrr-8!"
- (3) Pabst Beer: "Plan a head."
- (4) Ad which is part of Mobil's safe-driving campaign: "What's that in the road, a head?"

E. Idiomatic expressions/slang puns

- (1) Carry-out bags from a bookstore: "Our bag is books."
- (2) "Smoking is a drag."
- (3) Ad for a dairy: You can whip our cream. But you can't beat our milk!
- (4) "If you're bugged by bugs, flag them down with a Black Flag."
- (5) Schlitz beer: "Don't be out of it."
- (6) Old Grand Dad Bourbon: "If you're without it, you're not with it."

Activities

Have students write parodies on advertisements or on proverbs or sayings. To get them started, you might write common ads on the board and see what happens. (MAD magazine and many T-shirt and bumper sticker companies often do this: you may present them as models). Elicit familiar sayings from the students and put them all on a ditto. See what variations they can come up with. Have the students read their parodies aloud and have the others try to guess the original.

- (2) Have students write their own ads using orthographic plays on words:

FUN 4 U

C US 4 A GR-8 DEAL

- (3) Have students write ads using homophones. You may have them use their own, or you may furnish them with a list of possible homophones:

brake/break

bear/bare

buy/by/bye

cents/sense/scents

chilly/chilli

cell/sell

deer/dear

eight/ate

fair/fare

flare/flair

flee/flea

great/grate

herd/heard

mail/male

main/mane

meet/meat

pale/pail

raze/raise

sail/sale

scene/seen

seam/seem

see/sea

some/sum

week/weak

ware/ware

wait/weight

waste/waist

- (4) As a follow-up activity for the above, have the students, individually or in teams, make up a sentence containing a homophone. The other students must recognize the homophone in the sentence, and give another sentence with the second homophone.

Example: Student A: The sun is shining today.

Student B: His son is twenty years old.

- (5) Have students write "Tom Swifties," so called because of the pun on Tom Swift's name: "My name is Tom," he said swiftly. Put a list of -ly adverbs on the board, and after a few examples, see what the students come up with:

"I would like another pancake," she said flippantly.

"The coals are just right," she said glowingly.

- (6) Manufacturers often employ plays on words in naming their product to tell us something about the product:

Examples: Tide Detergent (washes away dirt)

Renuzit (furniture polish)

Breathless (mouthwash)

Eggbeaters (low-cholesterol egg substitute)

First to Last (pantyhose)

Have the students make up their own products using plays on words. Have them present the name of the product to the others in the class: the other students must guess what type of product it is.

Although the above lesson was developed for an English class, many or all of the activities may be adapted to teach any foreign language. For example, homophones are abundant in the French language, and Activities #3 and #4 can be used quite effectively:

mère/maire/mer
 paire/pair/perds/père
 taie/tes/"t"/thé
 sens/sans/sent/cent/

vert/vers (towards) /verre/vers (worm)/ vers (verse)
 mais/mets/mai/mes
 faire/fer

Advertisements can be used in a beginning language class to point out similarities between languages: words borrowed from one language to another, words similar in spelling (cognates). The students will be able to see that many 'foreign' languages aren't all that foreign!

Furnish the students with magazines and have them go through the ads. See if they can pick out the cognates, or words which are used interchangeably in the two languages.

Example: (German/English)

Glas
 Familie
 Foto
 Kaffee
 Musik
 Kamera
 Telefon
 Produktion
 Tabak
 Spezial
 Mann

Glass
 Family
 Photo
 Coffee
 Music
 Camera
 Telephone
 Production
 Tobacco
 Special
 Man

Have the students notice how many 'American' words are used in the foreign language text. This may lead to a discussion of the effects of the infiltration of American language and culture throughout the world. Ask the students their opinions about 'borrowing' words from other languages: Should languages be kept 'pure' or does borrowing words and phrases from other languages make our own language more dynamic and alive? Discuss 'Franglais' or 'Spanglish.'

Teaching Grammatical Rules and Relationships

An examination of ad copy shows that many times authors break usage rules to attract attention. This may be used advantageously by teachers to point out specific grammatical rules.

Find ads where grammatical rules are broken. Try and elicit from the students where the mistake lies. Then the rule may be discussed.

Examples (English):

- (1) Winston tastes good like a cigarette should. ("like" instead of "as")
- (2) Nobody doesn't like Sarah Lee. (use of double negative)
- (3) Chunky is the thickerer chocolate bar. (wrong usage of comparative)
- (4) 7-Up: The Un-Cola. (wrong usage of the prefix "un" with nouns)

Grammatical relationships can be altered to create interesting effects; the relationships between nouns, subject-object relationships, etc. are often ambiguous. Syntactic manipulation of the language can be taught through ads: this is a very common device of ad writers.

Examples (English):

- (1) Cheese can make you a hero this weekend. (Is "you" an indirect or direct object? Does "hero" refer to "you" or to a type of sandwich?)
- (2) Ad for a drink: "Make yourself a Red Baron."
- (3) Christmas ad for an airline (showing a picture of a 747): "Why don't you take one home to mother?"
- (4) An ad for eye make-up: "I can't believe my eyes!" ("eyes" doing the perceiving vs. "eyes" being the thing perceived)
- (5) "Starkist doesn't want tuna with good taste, Starkist wants tuna that tastes good."

Ads can also be used to illustrate grammatical rules. For example, one of the characteristics of German is the tendency to build up words by putting them together. Long compound words are quite common in German, and are known humorously as Schlangenwörter: 'snake words.' An exaggerated type of this is the word Dampfschiffahrtsgesellschaftsdirektorstellvertretersgemahlin, which means the "steam navigation company's manager's deputy's wife."

The two advertisements on page 8 are illustrations of Schlangenwörter. A possible activity would be to have students look for similar examples in magazine and newspaper advertisements. Have them create their own ads for imaginary products combining nouns and prefixes and suffixes.

Teaching Culture

One of the cultural goals identified by H. Ned Seelye in his book Teaching Culture¹ is the ability of the student to make, evaluate, and refine generalities concerning the target culture.

Advertisements are cultural documents. They can be used as a basis for making hypotheses about the target culture.

Objective: To make cultural generalities about a target culture.

Materials: Foreign language magazines of different types: political, women's, decorating, etc.

Procedure: The class is divided into pairs or small groups.
The teacher reads the following instructions:

You have just become an ambassador to Country X. You know the target language but you know nothing about the people. You have just arrived on a night flight and are now at the airport waiting to go to your hotel. As you wait at the taxi stand, you notice a magazine rack. You purchase several magazines. When you arrive at your hotel, you sit back and look at the magazines you bought.

1. (Skokie, Illinois: National Textbook Company, 1976), p. 78.

The students look at the magazines (ads, articles, cartoons, pictures) and make a list of priorities of the target culture.

The teacher puts the list on the board, and the students discuss the ways in which they reached their hypotheses. They then give illustrations to back up the hypotheses.

Students should be made aware that cultural models are based on many variables: age, sex, social class, place of residence, etc. The following activity is designed to facilitate this awareness.

- Objective:** To find the factors that affect cultural generalities.
- Materials:** Foreign language magazines of specific types: teen magazines, women's magazines, etc.
- Procedure:** The class is divided into small groups. Each group is assigned an age category: children (8 years of age and younger); teens; young adults (20-30 yrs.); middle-aged adults (30-65); Senior Citizens (65 and over). Each group receives magazines geared toward their specific age groups. Each group must (1) write down the items which are geared to the age group they are researching, and (2) categorize the items as to the type of product: beauty aids, health products, appliances, educational facilities (schools, courses), food items, etc. Each group writes its list on the board. As a class, the students discuss the priorities for each age group, and the priorities in the society as far as age groups: To whom are most of the ads geared? What does this tell you about this society?

Differences are evident when examining advertisements for products sold in two different cultures. Furnish the students with foreign language magazines. Have them look for American products. Discuss the ways in which these products are advertised in the foreign language magazine and in similar American magazines: What are some of the similarities? Some of the differences? What is the orientation of the ad? Are the products geared to the same population? Three excellent choices of products when comparing French and American cultures are lingerie, cheese, and mineral water, as the differences "sautent aux yeux!"

Culturally-conditioned images are even associated with the most common target words and phrases: Are a pub, a bar, and a café really the same thing? Each evokes different images in the societies where it exists. Similarly, the concept of the word 'snow' is not the same for people who interact with it (such as the Eskimo), people who just experience it as a part of the changing of the seasons, or people who live in climates where snow does not exist.

- Objective:** To make students aware of the culturally-conditioned images of words: Cheese in French culture.
- Materials:** Advertisements for French cheese.
- Activities:** Point out the frequency of cheese advertisements in French magazines, and the variety of cheeses in France. Discuss the cultural themes which are used in the advertising of cheese: intellectualism, the family, royalty, savoir vivre.

This can be used as an introductory lesson to show the importance cheese plays in French culture and society.

Advertisements may be used to create mini-cultural units to aid students in formulating hypotheses. Such units help students to develop cultural insights.

Der Freizeit-Ticker: Junghans olympic

Freizeituhr! Urlaubsuhr! Sportuhr! Taucheruhr! Parkuhr! Erstuhr!
Zweituhr! Fun-Uhr! Fan-Uhr! Nicht-nur-Uhr! Whisky-pur-Uhr!
Rund-um-die-Uhr-Uhr! Ganze Kerle mit kleinem Uhren-Tick
mögen die Junghans olympic.

Weil sie wasserdicht ist. Weil sie ein schnelles Design hat!
Und Datumanzeige! Tachometerring! Taucherring!
Oder Parkingmeterring! Glasfaserverstärktes Noryl-Gehäuse!
Gerillter Gehäuseboden! Seewasserfestes GT-Band!
Natürlich 17 Steine und Mittelsekunde.



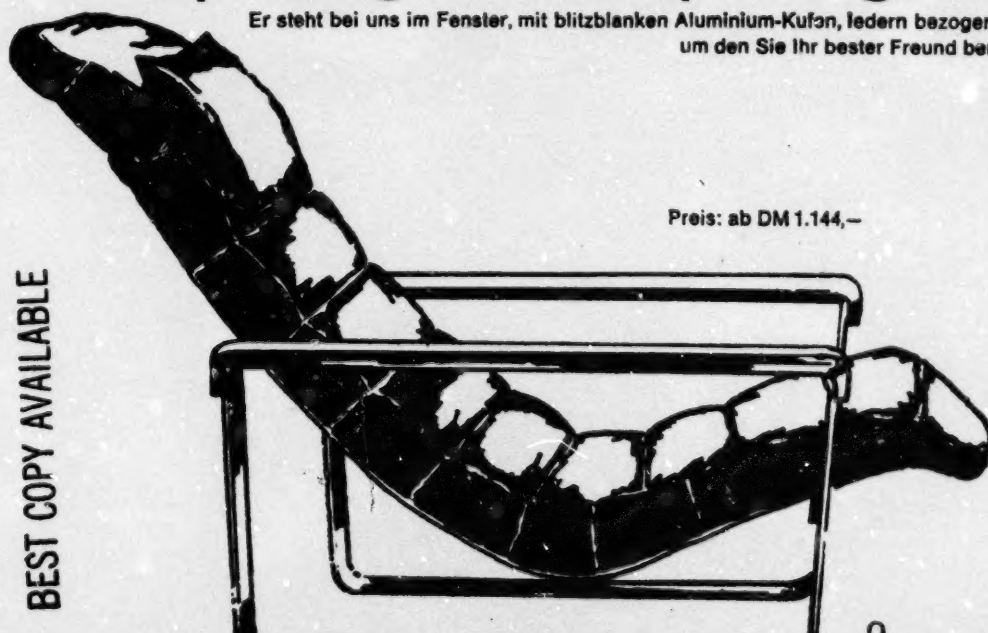
Wir haben uns
ungeschaut: Es gibt keine
sportlichere Freizeituhr
als die Junghans olympic.
Und davon gleich 11 Modelle
ab DM 75,—.

 **JUNGHANS**
olympic

ASKO präsentiert "pulkka"

Hier ist er, der einmalige Sitz-Liege-Lese-Ruhe-
Fernseh-Schlaf-Plauder-Schlummer-Traum-Sessel,
"pulkka" genannt. Bequemer geht's nicht mehr.

Er steht bei uns im Fenster, mit blitzblanken Aluminium-Kufen, ledern bezogen. Unverwechselbar. Ein Sessel,
um den Sie Ihr bester Freund beneiden wird.



Preis: ab DM 1.144,—

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

ASKO Finnlandmöbel



The following lesson is intended to introduce students to the world of employment of the target culture, through the use of classified advertising.

Objective: To formulate hypotheses about occupations and employment situations in the target culture.

Materials: Classified ads from foreign language newspapers.

Activities: Have the students look through the ads. Explain abbreviations used in the ads. As a class, discuss the following:

- (1) What types of jobs are open to men? to women?
- (2) What are the requirements for a specific job?
- (3) What are the average salaries for specific jobs? How do these compare to the salaries in the U.S.?
- (4) How do the ads differ from classified ads in American newspapers? For example, can they be gender- or age-specific? Is there any law in the country against discrimination?
- (5) What jobs are advertised for most often? least often? What does this tell you about the need for and/or popularity of this job? About the economic situation and needs of the target society?
- (6) What hypotheses can you make about the target culture as to:
 - ▲ the employment situation of the country?
 - ▲ the economic development?
 - ▲ the situation of women in regard to employment?
 - ▲ the status attached to certain jobs and occupations?

Mail-order catalogues

In addition to being picture dictionaries, as discussed earlier, mail order catalogues are veritable encyclopedias of cultural information. They may be used to illustrate:

- ▲ fashions in style in the target culture
- ▲ items bought and sold in the country, as well as information on their origin (i.e., imported or domestic)
- ▲ relative prices of items within the culture
- ▲ the system of weights and measurements
- ▲ the monetary system of the target culture
- ▲ systems of credit (if any)
- ▲ postal rates and system of delivery

There are numerous mail-order catalogues available in foreign languages for classroom use. Many cover as wide a range of products as Sears, Roebuck, and Co.; others are more specific. Among the German language mail-order houses are Quelle, Neckermann, and Wenz². Jelmoli is a Swiss mail-order house whose catalogue is in French³. Les Trois Suisses

2. You may write to these stores at the following addresses: Quelle International, P.O. Box 999, Oceanside, NY 11572; Neckermann Versand, Hanauer Landstrasse 360, 6000 Frankfurt AM Main, West Germany; Wenz, c/o Thomas Bergamo, 181 Nelson Avenue, Chelsea City, NJ 07307. There maybe a minimal charge for these catalogues.

3. Write to: Grands Magasins Jelmoli, SA; Seidengasse #1 8001; Zurich, Switzerland.

is one of the biggest mail-order houses in France⁴. For those who teach English as a second or foreign language, there is Sears, Roebuck, and Co., Montgomery Wards, Spiegel, and J.C. Penny. If you write to the Public Relations Department of these stores, you may be able to receive multiple copies of older catalogues for your classroom.

Mail-order catalogues can be used in the following class activities:

- (1) have students place imaginary orders by telephone;
- (2) have students place orders by filling out the order form in the catalogue;
- (3) have students open up a charge account by filling out the form in the catalogue;
- (4) have students figure out their size in the measurement system of the country;
- (5) give students measurements of hypothetical people and have them buy gifts for these people. Or have them figure out the sizes of their friends and relatives in order to purchase items for them;
- (6) give students products to order. Have them look them up in the index, and find them in the catalogue. Have them look up the cost of the items and compute their prices (including postage if you wish).

Further Activities

- (1) Use ads for dictations.
- (2) Use ads as a translation exercise, translating the ad copy from English to the target language, or vice-versa.
- (3) Give students real products and have them write an ad for them. Or do this orally, and have them make a television or radio commercial.
- (4) Have the students create their own products and advertisements and/or commercials to go with them. Have them perform in front of the class.
- (5) Have students create jingles for existing or imaginary products.
- (6) Play "Guess the Product": the students talk about their product without revealing what the product is. The other students must guess. (This may also be done as a written exercise: Students write the ad copy on a piece of paper and then pass it to another student, who must guess the product.)
- (7) Set up a department store in the classroom. The students are the shoppers. Any time that they make a purchase, they must spontaneously do a commercial for that product or item.
- (8) Have students perform 'man-in-the-street' type commercials, where people are interviewed in the stores as to their preferences for particular products or brands.
- (9) Have students research a region of the target country and gather information on places of interest, tourist attractions, parks, etc. They then write a travel ad for their assigned location.
- (10) Have students create and advertise a product that no one would want.
- (11) "Super Summer Sale:" Have students sell products described in three words beginning with the same letter. For example, 'warm, wiggly worms,' 'merveilleusement marrantes maisons.'

4. Write to: Les Trois Suisses; 64 Rue Caumartin; Paris 75009; France.

(12) Have students write classified ads:

- ▲ to sell their house;
- ▲ to sell something they no longer want;
- ▲ to rent their room as a furnished room;
- ▲ advertising their parents (hired as parents or in some other capacity);
- ▲ to sell a pet: have the pet be an imaginary, fantastic animal;
- ▲ to buy something they've always wanted;
- ▲ for the lost-and-found section, to locate a lost friend, object, or pet;
- ▲ for the 'personal' column;
- ▲ for their mother (father, friend) on Mother's (Father's, St. Valentine's) Day.

The ideas presented here are only a sample of how advertisements can be effective teaching tools, and should serve to further stimulate the creativity of the innovative foreign language teacher.



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